

**Sudan – South Sudan Relations Analysis: December 12, 2012 –  
January 16, 2013****Prospects of War Over Abyei****Jonathan Rozen**

The failure of the AU imposed deadline for a settlement regarding the Abyei region furthered the perception that a decision will need to be reached by the international community. It has also prompted new discussion of fresh direct conflict between Sudan and South Sudan.

With or without an AU decision to refer the case to the UNSC, both Sudanese states have begun courtship of other nations to their side of the dispute. Most notable has been the vigorous efforts by South Sudan to secure the support of Russia, a long-time supporter of Sudan.<sup>1</sup> "We have come with comrade Pagan [Amum] to meet with senior government officials [in Moscow]... We would like the Russian government to play a positive role in current discussions", said South Sudan's co-chair of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC), Luka Biong Deng.<sup>2</sup> With tensions rising over the seemingly imminent transfer of the decision from the African community to that of the UN, both sides have raised the prospect of war between Sudan and South Sudan. However, each side has framed the discussion of renewing possible conflict in a manner which suits their position in the dispute. Sudan, fearing an unfavourable AUC or UNSC decision, has continued to hint that any movement toward a referendum risks opening conflict.<sup>3</sup> It is unclear if this is intended as a threat or as a caution.

South Sudan, in contrast, has framed the prospect of war as an important factor in support of greater international involvement and mediation.<sup>4</sup> "Our people have a hope in the international community which have shown the will to mediate between the two sides," said South Sudanese politician Kuol Manyang Juuk.<sup>5</sup> South Sudan has also referenced lacking Sudanese consistency of action with the Sudanese Presidential talks earlier in January. Luka Biong Deng, accused Sudan of attempting to unilaterally establish "their own Abyei Commission for Humanitarian Affairs", and Sudan have since called on Misseriya leaders to settle in Abyei during this year to participate in the

---

<sup>1</sup> "African Union holds decisive meeting on Abyei." *Sudan Tribune*, sec. News, December 14, 2012. <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article44858> (January 16, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> "S. Sudan engages with Russia to support African Union Abyei proposal." *Sudan Tribune*, sec. News, December 7, 2012. <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article44765> (January 16, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> "S. Sudan engages with Russia to support African Union Abyei proposal." *Sudan Tribune*, sec. News, December 7, 2012. <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article44765> (January 16, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> "S. Sudan warns of looming war with Sudan over Abyei." *Sudan Tribune*, sec. News, January 13, 2013. <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article45168> (January 16, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> "S. Sudan warns of looming war with Sudan over Abyei." *Sudan Tribune*, sec. News, January 13, 2013. <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article45168> (January 16, 2013).

possible referendum.<sup>6</sup> Regardless of the international status on the Abyei decision, UN peacekeepers have been reinforced and remain as an important presence in the disputed region.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> "S. Sudan warns of looming war with Sudan over Abyei." *Sudan Tribune*, sec. News, January 13, 2013. <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article45168> (January 16, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> "UNSC expands peacekeepers' mandate in Abyei." *Radio Dabanga*, sec. News, December 16, 2012. <http://www.radiodabanga.org/node/22271> (January 16, 2013).